The Wave Sheaf and the Two Wave Loaves

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As we know, we're all here to keep the Feast of Pentecost, one of God's annual holy days. I think most often when we think about the Feast of Pentecost, probably what first comes to our mind is historical events. One of the things we probably most often think about is the story in Acts 2. We think about the founding of the New Testament church, the giving of the holy spirit, or you might even think back farther than that. You might think of the giving of the law at Mount Sinai.

These are all accurate things to associate with Pentecost. The church was formed on Pentecost, that is when the holy spirit was given. Acts 2 directly tells us all of that. But we oftentimes tend to think of Pentecost in terms of historical events, or you might say the beginning of the process of conversion for the firstfruits. Pentecost has a bigger meaning than that because it doesn't just picture the beginning of the process, it also pictures the culmination of the process. It doesn't just look to our history, it also looks to our future.

If we look at the total meaning of Pentecost is, it's a much bigger picture than just looking back and remembering historical events. There is nothing inaccurate about looking back at those events. They certainly are very intimately attached to the meaning of Pentecost. But my point is that the meaning of Pentecost is bigger than that.

Today we're going to look at this subject in the context of two particular ceremonies that are associated with this holy day. One occurred specifically on this day and was actually done on Pentecost in the Old Testament, and the other is the ceremony that is used as the starting point for calculating this day. So they are both very intimately tied to the meaning of this day and very intimately tied to the meaning of the firstfruits and the ultimate picture of the firstfruits. If you'd like a title for today's sermon, it's

<u>The Wave Sheaf and The Two Wave Loaves</u>

These two ceremonies are very intimately attached to Pentecost and teach us the full meaning, the full picture of what this day looks at.

To start off, let's turn to Leviticus 23. If you have a ribbon you can put it in Leviticus 23 because we're going to spend a lot of time in this chapter.

> ***Leviticus 23:9.*** *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,*
> *10) "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest.*

11) He shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it.
12) And you shall offer on that day, when you wave the sheaf, a male lamb of the first year, without blemish, as a burnt offering to the LORD.
13) Its grain offering shall be two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, an offering made by fire to the LORD, for a sweet aroma; and its drink offering shall be of wine, one-fourth of a hin.
14) You shall eat neither bread nor parched grain nor fresh grain until the same day that you have brought an offering to your God; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. (NKJV)

Before we go any further, let me just highlight several points that we're going to emphasize as we go throughout this. Notice it starts off "when you get in the land, you're going to do this." I'm pointing that out because it will become significant in a moment. The instructions start off with "when you get in the Promised Land, that is when you'll start doing this."

Notice this whole ceremony is about a sheaf of the firstfruits. So we need to understand who the firstfruits are to understand what all this is referring to.

Notice also that it is "presented before the Lord on your behalf." It's presented on behalf of the firstfruits – this offering is presented on our behalf – and we'll get into what that means later.

It ends with saying, "You can't eat any parched grain or any fresh grain in the land until you have done this ceremony." Notice those details because we're going to come back to those as we go through this.

First, let's focus on understanding when this was to take place. It started off saying to do this on the day after the Sabbath. What Sabbath are we talking about here? You're probably aware that Leviticus 23 is our go-to chapter when we talk about the festivals throughout the year because it not only covers the weekly Sabbath, but it covers all the annual festivals throughout the year. But if you look through this chapter, the only thing you're going to see referred to with the language "the Sabbath" is the weekly Sabbath. All the holy days are referred to and they are technically Sabbaths, but when you see something referred to as the Sabbath in this chapter, it's the weekly Sabbath. And you'll see other evidences of that as we go through this.

We know it's the weekly Sabbath it's talking about, but which one? We have 52 weeks in a year and every one of them has a Sabbath. Which one do you pick? We've got to have some way to nail this down. Otherwise we'd have people all over the place on this subject. It's the same logic on why you do a calendar; so you can get everyone doing something uniformly, on the same day.

The only way we can figure it out is by context. You'll notice the verses we just read don't specify which Sabbath. Let's notice the context and then we can figure it out. Go to verse 4.

> ***Leviticus 23:4.*** *'These are the feasts of the LORD, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times.*
> *5) On the fourteenth day of the first month at twilight is the LORD's Passover.*
> *6) And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the LORD; seven days you must eat unleavened bread.*
> *7) On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work on it.*
> *8) But you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD for seven days. The seventh day shall be a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work on it.' " (NKJV)*

In the scriptures leading up to this, the context is the spring festival season. It refers to the Passover and seven Days of Unleavened Bread. So the weekly Sabbath here, looking to the context to tell us what weekly Sabbath we're talking about, we're talking about one that falls during the spring festival season, with that 8 days period of the Passover day and the seven Days of Unleavened Bread.

So we know now we're talking about the weekly Sabbath that falls during that period and then we're also talking about the day after that weekly Sabbath, the Sunday after the weekly Sabbath, which is the day to do the wave sheaf.

But if you have an 8-day period, it's actually possible to have more than one Sabbath during that time frame. Because you can have a scenario where you have two weekly Sabbaths in an 8-day period. The way that can happen is if the Passover day is the Sabbath, seven days later you're going to have the Last Day of Unleavened Bread and it's going to be a weekly Sabbath as well. So which one do you pick? How do you sort that out?

Here's an easy way to remember this. You have two days that are significant. The Sabbath and the day after the Sabbath and both are significant in this context. If you simply remember you have two days that are significant, you need both of them to fall during the spring festival season. That clarifies this issue for you.

If you think about it, if you've got the Passover day being a Sabbath, the day afterwards will be a Sunday and it will be the first Day of Unleavened Bread. If you pick the Last Day of Unleavened Bread as a weekly Sabbath, that Sunday is now outside of the spring festival season, so it's outside of it.

How do we know that is correct? How do we know that last Sabbath is not equally valid? We can prove that by biblical example. Turn to Joshua 5. Let me just set the scene on the context before we read that.

I'm sure we're all familiar with the fact that when Ancient Israel came out of Egypt, they were initially heading straight to the Promised Land but things didn't go as planned and God makes them wonder in the wilderness for forty years before they can inherit the Promised Land. So in the story here, they finally actually go and cross the Jordan River and take possession of the Promised Land. Remember when we started off reading Leviticus 23, the first sentence there was "When you get into the land, then you shall do this ceremony." So the first opportunity they would have to do this would be when they took possession of the land. So the first spring holy day season after they entered the Promised Land is the first opportunity they would have to do this. Remember also that last scripture said they weren't allowed to eat any parched grain or any fresh grain of the land until they did the ceremony.

> ***Joshua 5:10.*** *Now the children of Israel camped in Gilgal, and kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight on the plains of Jericho. (NKJV)*

So now we know this is the first spring festival season they were able to keep in the land.

> *11) And they ate of the produce of the land on the day after the Passover, unleavened bread and parched grain, on the very same day. (NKJV)*

That last part of Leviticus 23 said they couldn't eat any parched grain until they did this ceremony. And when is this to be done? On the day after the Sabbath that falls during the spring festival season. This was the first festival season they had when they entered the land and on the second day, they are eating parched grain. That tells us that earlier that day, they did the wave sheaf. And when was the wave sheaf? The day after the weekly Sabbath. So what does that make Passover? The Passover day then was a weekly Sabbath. They're using that first Sabbath. So by biblical example we can see which one is accurate. So now we know basically when to keep this.

Now let's look at more of what it means.

I pointed out the fact that when he was waving this sheaf, he said it was the sheaf of the firstfruits. So now we need to understand who the firstfruits are and what this is picturing. But first let's look at something else. In Leviticus 23 it's referred to a sheaf of the firstfruits. If we look in Exodus 23, we'll see a brief mention of the same ceremony with a little bit different terminology used.

> ***Exodus 23:19.*** *The first of the firstfruits of your land you shall bring into the house of the LORD your God….(NKJV)*

This is a brief reference to that same ceremony but notice the terminology used. It's called the first of the firstfruits. What is the firstfruits, what does that term refer to in the bible? Who are the firstfruits and who is the first of the firstfruits?

If we turn over to James 1, we get the answer for who the Bible refers to as the firstfruits. We often refer to Pentecost as the Feast of Firstfruits. Those exact words (Feast of Firstfruits) do not appear in the Bible. I discovered that this year as I was preparing this sermon. I typed Feast of Firstfruits into my PC Bible program to do a word search and nothing came up in any of the translations. In the New Testament, Pentecost is referred to as Pentecost which is a Greek term meaning *count fifty*. In the Old Testament, it's most often referred to as Feast of Weeks. It will also say Feast of Weeks of the firstfruits or the day of the firstfruits. So the concept of the Feast of Firstfruits is accurate, but that exact phrase does not appear anywhere in the Bible text.

> ***James 1:16.*** *Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.*
> *17) Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.*
> *18) Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures. (NKJV)*

What it's referring to here in terms of the firstfruits is that we are the first of God's creation. It's referring to the fact that God created mankind with the purpose in mind of extending His family, giving mankind the opportunity to be born into His family as God-beings, assuming we would obey Him. The order in which He does that is that there's a small group that He is working with prior to the firs resurrection that have the first opportunity to join that family before the rest of mankind and that group is referred to as the firstfruits. That's the Church of God and all those He's worked with, with His spirit, from creation until the first resurrection.

So now that we know who the firstfruits are, what is the first of the firstfruits? Turn to 1 Corinthians 15 and we will investigate this.

> ***1 Corinthians 15:20.*** *But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.*
> *21) For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead.*
> *22) For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.*
> *23) But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. (NKJV)*

Notice here that Jesus Christ is referred to as one of these firstfruits as well. But what is the order it lays out here for us? It tells us that He was resurrected a couple thousand years ago after His life on earth. He was a God-being prior to that and He is restored back to that status. But He is the first human being raised from the dead and made a God-being. He is the first of this group called the firstfruits.

Turn to Romans 8 and you can see a similar comment here.

> ***Romans 8:28.*** *And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.*

29) For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. (NKJV)

In other words, there is this large family of human being that will be redeemed from the earth, but who was the very first one? Jesus Christ. Other translations actually refer to this as first among a large family. It's ultimately the family of God that we will all become but the first one was Jesus Christ.

So now we know who the firstfruits are: the Church of God, everyone that God has worked with from creation up until the first resurrection and part of who is included in that group is Jesus Christ, but He's the first born from the dead so He's the first of the firstfruits. We are the rest of the firstfruits.

I pointed out another thing in Leviticus 23 and that is that this wave sheaf offering was waved before the Lord to be accepted on our behalf. So now we know this is a symbol of Jesus Christ because He is the first of the firstfruits. What does mean that He was accepted on our behalf before the Lord.

Turn to Hebrews 10, we can answer this question.

Hebrews 10:10. *By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*
11) And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.
12) But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God,
13) from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool.
14) For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified. (NKJV)

Notice He did this, but whose benefit was it for? It was for us to be sanctified.

15) But the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us; for after He had said before,
16) "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,"
17) then He adds, "their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."
18) Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin. (NKJV)

Notice through His sacrifice, once for all, covered all of us. That covered our sins and enabled us to be forgiven and gives us a chance to be part of the firstfruits, to have a chance at salvation and become part of God's family. Without that, we can never make it because regardless of how obedient we are and how much we strive to overcome in our Christian lives, that doesn't cover our past sins. That doesn't give us forgiveness and relieve us from the death penalty. He had to do that for us. So this is what is

symbolized here that He is the first of the firstfruits offered before the Lord to be accepted on our behalf. In other words, His sacrifice is enabling that for us.

So now that we understand what this ceremony is accomplishing and what it is symbolizing, let's get a closer idea of what this ceremony actually looked like. That gives us a better picture of how it was actually fulfilled. Leviticus 23. I'm going to read some sections we've read before but this time out of the New Revised Standard Version because I think the wording is a little clearer and gives a more graphic idea of what the ceremony actually looked like The New King James referred to it as a wave offering with the priest waving it. In English, when we use the term "wave" we think about waving "hi" to somebody with your hand. That's not what this ceremony looked like.

> ***Leviticus 23:11.*** *He shall raise the sheaf before the Lord, that you may find acceptance; on the day after the sabbath the priest shall raise it.*
> *12) On the day when you raise the sheaf, you shall offer a lamb a year old, without blemish, as a burnt offering to the Lord.*
> *…*
> *15) And from the day after the sabbath, from the day on which you bring the sheaf of the elevation offering, you shall count off seven weeks; they shall be complete. (NRSV)*

Notice instead of waving it, it refers to raising or elevating this offering. It wasn't waving, it was elevating it up and then back down. That's what this ceremony actually looked like.

Now we understand who is being pictured here, the first of the firstfruits which is Jesus Christ, being presented before the Lord on our behalf. It was raised up and then back down. If we look at how this was fulfilled, it looked just like this – an elevation up and then back down.

In John chapter 20, I want to set the scene for what led up to this. We are familiar with the fact that Jesus was crucified on a Wednesday afternoon. On the Tuesday evening before that, He kept the Passover with His disciples and that evening He is betrayed, arrested, tried, tortured, and killed in the afternoon on Wednesday. He's put into the grave right as sunset on Wednesday. He said the only sign of Him being the Christ was the sign of Jonah, that He would be in the earth three days and three nights – 72 hours. So He's put in the grave at sunset on Wednesday afternoon and three days and three nights later is the sunset at the end of the Sabbath on Saturday. That's when He's resurrected and brought back to life. But He doesn't immediately ascend to the Father. In John 20, Mary Magdalene arrives at the tomb early on Sunday morning and discovers that Jesus is already gone, He's already been resurrected. This is the context that leads up to verse 11.

> ***John 20:11.*** *But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the tomb.*

12) And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.
13) Then they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him."
14) Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus.
15) Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, "Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away."
16) Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to Him, "Rabboni!" (which is to say, Teacher).
17) Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.' " (NKJV)

He would not allow her to touch Him. That's a significant factor here. He's still on the earth and He says He hasn't ascended to His Father yet, but tells Mary to go and tell everyone else that is what He is about to do – to ascend to the Father. He's on earth, and He's about to be elevated up, to go to the Father to be accepted as a sacrifice on our behalf. This was to enable us to have the chance to receive salvation.

In Matthew 28, we'll notice something that happened that same day.

Matthew 28:9. *And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, "Rejoice!" So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him. (NKJV)*

Notice they were touching Him.

10) Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me." (NKJV)

Now He is back and He allows them to touch Him. Before He was telling Mary not to touch Him because He hadn't gone to the Father, but to tell everyone that is what He was about to do – to go up to the Father. So obviously now He's back down on earth. What does this look like? He's elevated up from the earth and now He's coming back down. Looks just like the ceremony in Leviticus 23. When did this take place? On Sunday during the Days of Unleavened Bread. He's killed at the end of Wednesday, Thursday is the First Day of Unleavened Bread, so He's in the grave Thursday, Friday, Saturday and at sunset He's resurrected. So when is that all playing out? On Sunday, the day after the Sabbath during the festival season, just the ceremony did. It all matches perfectly.

Now let's turn back to Leviticus 23 and pick up in verse 15 and focus more on the second ceremony. But before we do that, these next couple of verses specifically refer

to how we count to Pentecost. I'm going to read again from the New Revised Standard Version because I think it gives a more detailed, accurate account of what the verse is saying.

> ***Leviticus 23:15.*** *And from the day after the sabbath, from the day on which you bring the sheaf of the elevation offering, you shall count off seven weeks; they shall be complete.*
> *16) You shall count until the day after the seventh sabbath, fifty days; then you shall present an offering of new grain to the Lord.*
> *…*
> *21) On that same day you shall make proclamation; you shall hold a holy convocation; you shall not work at your occupations. This is a statute forever in all your settlements throughout your generations. (NRSV)*

I jumped down to verse 21 to show you that when you finish this count, you do the ceremony, but it's on that same day that you declare a holy day. So that's the Day of Pentecost. So this count comes to this ceremony and to the day we declare as the Day of Pentecost.

Let's notice some criteria on how this plays out. There are several criteria and we have to meet all of them to do this count correctly. It starts off saying "from the day after the Sabbath." So we're starting on the day after the Sabbath and we're counting until the day after the Sabbath. So you must have two Sabbaths involved in the equation.

It also tells us we must have seven complete weeks. What is the definition of a complete week? It's day one through day seven, or what we would call Sunday through Saturday – that's a complete week. It says we have to have seven on those and we're counting to fifty days.

If you put all of that criteria together, there is really only one way you can do this counting. For example, if you take the year 2015, the First Day of Unleavened Bread was on a Sabbath. That was our weekly Sabbath. It was also the high day. So the Sunday afterward is that wave sheaf day. If you count fifty days from there, you end up on a Sunday, Pentecost. Notice we started on the day after the weekly Sabbath and ended on the day after a weekly Sabbath and we have seven complete weeks in between. That's the way to do this.

There are several arguments as to how to count to this day. There are two most common arguments. One is the idea of Sivan 6. It's referred to that because Sivan is the third month on the Hebrew calendar and the 6 is for the 6th day. The argument is that the day after the Sabbath where you start the count is not the weekly Sabbath – it's the First Day of Unleavened Bread. The First Day of Unleavened Bread is always the fifteenth day of the first month so your second say of unleavened bread is going to be the sixteenth day of the first month. If you always do a fifty day count from the sixteenth day of the first month, you're always going to end up on the sixth day of Sivan. So you always end up there and that's why they call it the Sivan 6.

There are several problems with the Sivan 6 argument. Because if you did it this way in 2015, you'd come out exactly the same because the First Day of Unleavened Bread was a weekly Sabbath. But in most years that's not true. To illustrate this, let's say the First Day of Unleavened Bread was on a Tuesday, so the day after is Wednesday. If you do a fifty day count from there, you will end on a Wednesday. There are now two major problems. When you start on a Wednesday, we can say that you started on a Sabbath because it's a holy day Sabbath, it's not a weekly Sabbath but technically you can at least argue that you started after a Sabbath. Then you end on a Wednesday. But what do you use for that second Sabbath? You don't have one because you don't have another holy day to claim and you certainly don't have a weekly Sabbath, so you violated that rule. We also violated the complete weeks rule because you only have week fragments by starting from day four of one week and ending of day three of the next week for every seven day cycle that we have. It's not complete weeks, it's week fragments. So every rule along the way is violated and to add an extra complication, if you go back to the year when Christ actually fulfilled this, we know absolutely for sure He did it on a Sunday. If you use the Sivan 6 argument, you have to use Friday as the day after the First Day of Unleavened Bread when Christ is dead and in the grave. Nothing matches. It doesn't work.

The other most common argument is the idea of putting Pentecost on a Monday. You may remember that the Radio Church of God and the Worldwide Church of God, for several decades, kept Pentecost on a Monday. There are two ways to arrive at that argument. One of them is that you count from the weekly Sabbath and the day after it, but you don't count that first day as day one. You count day one as the Monday and, of course, fifty days from there is a Monday. But now where is your second Sabbath? You don't have one because now you're not on the day after any Sabbath, you can't claim a holy day because you don't have a weekly Sabbath, you're too far out. And you still have week fragments because you started on the second day of a week and ended every seven day cycle goes from the second day of one week to the first day of the next week. That's not complete weeks, it's week fragments. So this argument doesn't work.

There's another way to arrive at this argument. You can say that yes, you do the count exactly the same, but the fifty days have to be complete. So you do the count exactly from the Sunday after the Sabbath to the Sunday fifty days later, but you keep the day afterwards because they weeks have to be complete. That's the way the argument goes. Well, let's look at scripture to see what about this actually has to be complete. It's very specific in the New Revised Standard. If you read verse 15 again:

> ***Leviticus 23:15.*** *And from the day after the sabbath, from the day on which you bring the sheaf of the elevation offering, you shall count off seven weeks; they shall be complete. (NRSV)*

What's complete? The seven weeks.

16) You shall count until the day after the seventh sabbath, fifty days; then you shall present an offering of new grain to the Lord. (NRSV)

So you're counting until that fiftieth day, you're doing the offering on that day and when is the holy day? Verse 21:

21) On that same day you shall make proclamation; you shall hold a holy convocation; you shall not work at your occupations. … (NRSV)

So this holy day is the same day you're doing this offering which is the fiftieth day. Because seven weeks have to be complete, you count until the fiftieth day and on that day you're doing it. If you go back to all the other criteria, that's the only way to make all of this match up and to make all the criteria work.

Just another interesting side note, as I was researching this I came across another argument for the Monday idea is the idea that revelation can never be changed. In other words, when Mr. Armstrong came to understand the holy days this was his understanding. Worldwide did this for decades and that was God's perfect revelation and that can never be altered. But the same individuals who argue that say that according to their records, when Mr. Armstrong first began keeping the holy days, for years he was keeping the Sivan 6 Pentecost. It was years later that he realized that was wrong and then started keeping a Monday Pentecost. So if your argument is that Mr. Armstrong originally did this and that can never be altered, you have to go back to Sivan 6. I'm not advocating that. We should follow Mr. Armstrong's own advice: don't believe me, believe your Bible. Compare everything to your Bible and believe that.

Let's move on now to looking at the second ceremony which is the two wave loaves. We'll see this ceremony is very similar in how it played out to the wave sheaf and our understanding of the wave sheaf gives us a good guide to understand what the two wave loaves ceremony is referring to. To get it all in context, I'm going to start back with verse 15:

Leviticus 23:15. *And from the day after the sabbath, from the day on which you bring the sheaf of the elevation offering, you shall count off seven weeks; they shall be complete.*
16) You shall count until the day after the seventh sabbath, fifty days; then you shall present an offering of new grain to the Lord.
17) You shall bring from your settlements two loaves of bread as an elevation offering, each made of two-tenths of an ephah; they shall be of choice flour, baked with leaven, as first fruits to the Lord. (NRSV)

Notice these two loaves represent the firstfruits.

18) You shall present with the bread seven lambs a year old without blemish, one young bull, and two rams; they shall be a burnt offering to the Lord, along with

their grain offering and their drink offerings, an offering by fire of pleasing odor to the Lord.
19) You shall also offer one male goat for a sin offering, and two male lambs a year old as a sacrifice of well-being.
20) The priest shall raise them with the bread of the first fruits as an elevation offering before the Lord, together with the two lambs; they shall be holy to the Lord for the priest.
21) On that same day you shall make proclamation; you shall hold a holy convocation; you shall not work at your occupations. This is a statute forever in all your settlements throughout your generations. (NRSV)

This ceremony looks very similar to the wave sheaf offering. There are a few key differences. There are two loaves, and they are baked with leaven. We know with the wave sheaf, that refers to Jesus Christ – we saw all of that, not only the first of the firstfruits and the way it was fulfilled matches everything Jesus Christ did. But when we look at these two loaves, it says they are the firstfruits and they are baked with leaven. You never see a symbol pointing to Jesus Christ that is made with leaven because He's always unleavened because He lived a perfect life, He never sinned. We, on the other hand, are sinners. All of us have sinned and earned the death penalty and as we learned from the wave sheaf ceremony, if He hadn't gone to offer this sacrifice on our behalf, we would suffer the death penalty. So these two loaves represent the firstfruits and that's God's church. And they're baked with leaven because we are sinners who had to be redeemed by Jesus Christ's sacrifice.

Notice the symbolism of this. It is an elevation offering, just like the wave sheaf – elevated up and then back down. The symbolism is exactly the same because the picture is very much the same. This is presented before the Lord, just like it was with Jesus Christ when He was the wave sheaf. The symbolism is the same.

Let's see what all this means. If we keep in mind what the wave sheaf pictured, we can see the parallels here that give us a clear idea of what the ceremony pictures. All the firstfruits at the first resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15 get changed into God beings, those who qualify to be a part of His family. They are all resurrected to meet Jesus Christ. They are elevated in a similar fashion.

1 Corinthians 15:50. *Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption.*
51) Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—
52) in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. … (NKJV)

This happens at the last trumpet.

52b) …*For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*

53) For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.
54) So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." (NKJV)

It says at the first resurrection, at the blowing of the last trumpet, that's when God's people are changed, when those who have died in the faith and those who are alive at that point get changed into God beings and are resurrected to go up to meet Jesus Christ. Let's look at 1 Thessalonians 4 to get a more detailed picture of what this looks like.

1 Thessalonians 4:13. *But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.*
14) For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.
15) For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.
16) For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. (NKJV)

Notice he's talking about two different groups here.

17) Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.
18) Therefore comfort one another with these words. (NKJV)

Notice the phrase, *we shall always be with the Lord*. That will be significant later.

Notice the order that this is happening. It happens at the blowing of the last trumpet, the blowing of the seventh trumpet in Revelation that we'll get to in a minute. That's when the resurrection takes place, but how does it actually play out? First the dead in Christ are raised and then we who are alive come up later. Two different groups. What did the ceremony look like? It has two different loaves. They were both elevated up and back down. With this group, they are brought up to meet Christ in the air, they are elevated up.

Let's see where this happens in the timeline of Revelation. We'll start in verse 15 and what we're going to read in this section does not specifically reference the first resurrection. When we read through 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4, it told us about the blowing of the trumpet, the last trumpet, and that is when the resurrection takes place. So if we come with that information, now we know what also takes place in what we read in Revelation 11.

Revelation 11:15. *Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"*
16) And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God, (NKJV)

Notice the picture here that there are twenty-four elders before God's throne. That's a detail that we'll come back to later.

17) saying: "We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, The One who is and who was and who is to come, Because You have taken Your great power and reigned.
18) The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, And the time of the dead, that they should be judged, And that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, And those who fear Your name, small and great, And should destroy those who destroy the earth."
19) Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail. (NKJV)

This is describing the event around the blowing of the seventh trumpet. What did we learn from 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4? That at the blowing of the last trumpet is when the resurrection occurs and the dead in Christ are raised and those who are alive go up to meet Him. So that's the description of what takes place at the same point in time that we're looking at in Revelation.

The reason I'm making a point of this is that because prophecy is a subject that jumps all over the Bible in terms of setting and timelines and stuff like that. If you read through the Old Testament prophets, you'll be in the time of the Millennium and then into the day of the Lord and then the great white throne judgment and you're all over the place. So it can be hard to put together a timeline to structure event coming together. The book of Revelation is the best thing that we have as a skeleton to put together an order of events. That's always what we use as the backbone when we look at other scripture to put into order of events and how things happen. In terms of timeline, the prophets jump all over the place in terms of context.

Revelation lays out for us the day of the Lord, the seven trumpets and we know the resurrection takes place then and we go up to meet Christ in the air. In Revelation 19 we see Jesus Christ and the saints coming down on a white horse; the Mount of Olives takes place, the battle of Armageddon and such, and makes it flow together.

For much of my life I envisioned this scenario happening in a matter of hours or minutes. But there is a problem with that because in Revelation 11 is the timeline where the resurrection takes place, and it's not until Revelation 19 that Christ is coming down on the white horse. The seven last bowl plagues take place in between these two

if you read chapter 16. And the sixth bowl plague is the drying up of the Euphrates River so that armies from the east can come down to be positioned for the battle with Jesus Christ when He returns with the saints to the earth. We know from the news events that you don't muster huge armies and move them over long distances in minutes or a few hours. That takes time. I won't speculate on the time between these two events, but it's not reasonable in my opinion to believe that that takes place in minutes or hours.

What is happening with all of those who go up to meet Christ in the air during this time frame? Revelation 14 gives us a good idea of what's happening during this time frame.

> ***Revelation 14:1.*** *Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads. (NKJV)*

The reference to the Lamb is an obvious reference to Jesus Christ and He is standing with 144,000. Notice the description and figure out where they are and who they are. And we can put together that picture.

> *2) And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps.*
> *3) They sang as it were a new song before the throne,… (NKJV)*

They're before a throne and we'll see conclusively in a few more verses whose throne that is.

> *3b) … before the four living creatures, and the elders; … (NKJV)*

I mentioned when we were reading in chapter 11, to note the twenty-four elders before God's throne. In Revelation 4 there is a description of the throne of God and there are four living creatures and twenty-four elders around it. So you'll see these descriptions match exactly.

> *3 continued) …and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. (NKJV)*

The 144,000 are redeemed from the earth. That's our first clue as to who they are.

> *4) These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men,… (NKJV)*

Not just from the earth, but we now know they were formerly men.

> *4 continued) … being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb.*
> *5) And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault … (NKJV)*

Notice this last part.

> *4 continued) …before the throne of God. (NKJV)*

That is conclusive. We don't even have to guess what throne they are before. It tells us they are before God's throne. We have the four living creatures, the twenty-four elders, Jesus Christ is there, they're all standing before the throne of God.

So now we know where they. Who are they? Who are these 144,000? It says they were redeemed from the earth and they were redeemed from among men. So we know they are former human beings. In verse 4 it says *these were the ones that were not defiled with women, for they are virgins*. That's another big clue. Who does the Bible refer to as virgins?

> ***2 Corinthians 11:1.*** *Oh, that you would bear with me in a little folly—and indeed you do bear with me.*
> *2) For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. (NKJV)*

This is Paul writing to the church in Corinth and he's telling them that as converted Christians, their ultimate destiny is to be presented to Christ as a chaste virgin, as His bride. So the 144,000 are redeemed from the earth, they are redeemed from among men and they are called virgins. Back to Revelation 14:4. Picking up on that second sentence:

> *4b) These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes….(NKJV)*

When I read through 1 Thessalonians 4, I said to notice the part that says they follow Him now, that they will always be with the Lord and wherever He goes, they will go. WE know Jesus Christ is here because He's the Lamb standing here and it says these are the ones that follow Him everywhere. It's the same people. Notice the last sentence:

> *4 continued) …These were redeemed from among men being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. (NKJV)*

We read in James 1 who the Bible refers to as the firstfruits, it's the church of God, also referred to as the virgins, also referred to as those who are redeemed among men. All of this fits. We're talking about the resurrected saints who have gone up to meet Jesus Christ. But what are they doing in between Revelation 11 and Revelation 19? They before the throne of God. But what we saw in the wave sheaf was that it was waved before the Lord to be accepted on our behalf. And we know how that was fulfilled – Jesus Christ went up before God's throne and was accepted on our behalf and He came back down. The two wave ceremonies tell us this waved before the Lord and they are the firstfruits. You can see the exact picture of this here.

Now if we look at Revelation 19, we can complete the picture. We'll see that what takes place between Revelation 11 and Revelation 19 is the marriage supper. That's what's taking place in heaven because it's when the firstfruits are presented before the Lord to be accepted for Him.

> ***Revelation 19:1.*** *After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God!*
> *2) For true and righteous are His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her."*
> *3) Again they said, "Alleluia! Her smoke rises up forever and ever!"*
> *4) And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sat on the throne, saying, "Amen! Alleluia!" (NKJV)*

This same picture of God's throne.

> *5) Then a voice came from the throne, saying, "Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!"*
> *6) And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!*
> *7) Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." (NKJV)*

Who is the Lamb? It's Jesus Christ. Who is His bride? It's the church that's been resurrected and changed to God beings to marry Him.

> *8) And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.*
> *9) Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!' " And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God."*
> *10) And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." (NKJV)*

These next few verses show a picture of Jesus Christ on a white horse and the saints are with Him. The saints are referred to as the group that goes with Him wherever He goes. So if Jesus Christ is coming down doing this, they are coming with Him. Notice what happened. There were resurrected up to meet Him, we see the picture of them before God's throne and now we are seeing them coming back to earth. Coming back down. Elevated up and then back down. It's the exact same picture we saw with the wave sheaf.

11) Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.
12) His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself.
13) He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. (NKJV)

That's conclusive. We know this is Jesus Christ.

14) And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. (NKJV)

Notice who else is coming down here, following on white horses.

15) Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.
16) And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.
17) Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, "Come and gather together for the supper of the great God,
18) that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great."
19) And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.
20) Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.
21) And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh. (NKJV)

Here the saints have been resurrected and have gone up to meet Jesus Christ, gone to the marriage supper and now they are back down with Him on the earth fighting this battle. What does this look like? Elevated up and then back down. It's the exact same symbolism as we saw in the wave sheaf ceremony. The wave sheaf referred to the first of the firstfruits and this is the rest of the firstfruits. We can see the exact symbolism that we see on the Day of Pentecost.

We see from all of this that Pentecost isn't just a day that looks back at history. It is appropriate on this day to look back at the history, at the giving of the law and the giving of the holy spirit and the founding of the church or the beginning of this process. But it's also important to remember this Feast of Firstfruits isn't just about the beginning of that

process, it's also about the culmination of that process. It doesn't just look back at significant things in our past, we also look forward to our future and the exciting events we have to look forward to.

It's a day that's much bigger than just our past. It's something very much to look forward to and so when we focus on the lessons of the holy spirit and what it does for us and what we have to do to overcome, those are essential things. As we deal with the difficult things and trial and when life gets hard, we have not only that comfort to get us through the difficult times, but we also have an inspiring, incredible future to look forward to.

I'm a fan of the book of Job and I like to look at his trials because he went through a very, very difficult time in his life. I look at it like this: When Job gets to the first resurrection, regardless of all the horrible things he had to endure and overcome, as he stands on the sea of glass and being a part of this ceremony, I can guarantee you he's not going to be thinking about those hardships and difficulties. I think he's going to be standing there thinking it was all worth it to be a part of all of it, even though he had to go through all that agonizing suffering. This is permanent and that was temporary.

This is something we can look at when we face difficult times. God gave us His holy spirit on this day to comfort us and to enable us to overcome. He also gave us symbolism on this day of an incredible future to look forward to that motivates us. Because why would we ever want to miss that? If you think about our opportunities as firstfruits, it's the greatest opportunity that has ever been or ever will be offered to anyone who will ever live. It does not get any better than this.

When you think about what we have to go through in life, remember about this Day of Pentecost not just in the context of our past but of the incredibly inspiring future that we have to look forward to. Regardless of what you have to go through, would you want to give up this future of being a part of these spine-tingling events that are exciting to even read about? Because that's the decision that you're making. If you compromise on this, you're giving up being a part of this incredible future that we have to look forward to.

I guarantee if you are there, you're not going to care about what you had to go through to be there. You'll be so thankful to be there. So when you think about the Pentecost, don't just look at it in terms of remembering the past, look at it in terms of how incredible our future is.